

# IF YOU WONDER HOW THE U.S. GOT INTO THE WAR IN VIETNAM—

The question keeps coming up: How did the U. S. ever get into the war in Vietnam? What started it? And when? And why? Did the U. S. pick this spot to make a stand against the Communists? On these pages, a Washington newsman traces the history of the Vietnam crisis from its beginnings a quarter of a century ago.

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Many Americans are wondering how the United States got so involved in the war in Southeast Asia.

This is a significant chapter in the Communist design for postwar territorial expansion, a story of foreign intrigue that goes back to the breakup of the old world order in the chaos of World War II.

Before the war, three associated states of Indo-China—Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam—were under French colonial rule.

Taking advantage of the prostrate condition of Vichy France in 1941, the Japanese occupied Indo-China and used it as a base for further attacks on Thailand, Burma, Malaya, Indonesia, and the Philippines.

During the war in the Pacific, 1941-45, the United States provided military aid to Ho Chi Minh, a Moscow-trained Communist and veteran Soviet agent who led a native resistance movement against the Japanese in Indo-China.

President Roosevelt and Marshal Stalin of the Soviet Union discussed the future of Indo-China at wartime conferences in Teheran in 1943 and Yalta in 1945.

Roosevelt proposed that the area be placed under some kind of international trusteeship at the war's end, to prepare the people for independence in perhaps 20 to 30 years.

Stalin agreed. The Communist leader said he did not propose to have the Allies shed blood to return Indo-China to French masters, whom he termed "rotten" and "corrupt."

Roosevelt said Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek had assured him that China had no postwar designs on Southeast Asia.

When the French tried to regain their position in Indo-China after the war, Ho Chi Minh seized power, proclaimed a "people's republic," and fired on Hanoi Dec. 19, 1946, starting a 7½-year civil war.



—USN&WR Photo

The policy of American military and economic assistance to anti-Communist forces in the area started in 1950 under the Truman Administration.

The U. S. Government agreed to provide arms and ammunition to French Union forces fighting the Communist-led Viet Minh in Indo-China. Another agreement for direct economic aid to Vietnam was signed in 1951.

Altogether, the U. S. paid approximately 3 billion dollars of the costs of the losing French struggle against the Viet Minh. After the Communists completed their conquest of China in 1949, the Viet Minh were supplied across the border from Red China.

When Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower took office as President in 1953, world attention was focused on the Korean War, which had been going on for 2½ years.

Mr. Eisenhower sent word to Peiping by Prime Minister Nehru of India that, unless truce talks showed satisfactory progress, the U. S. intended to "move decisively without inhibition in our use of weapons, and would no longer be responsible for confining hostilities to the Korean Peninsula."

An armistice was signed at Panmunjom July 27, 1953, ending three years of warfare in Korea, at a cost of 157,530 American casualties, including 54,246 dead.

The struggle for supremacy in Asia shifted to Indo-China. Mr. Eisenhower gives a lengthy account in his book "Mandate for Change" (Doubleday, 1961):

"Toward the end of 1953, the effect of the termination of hostilities in Korea began to be felt in Indo-China. . . . The Chinese Communists now were able to spare greatly increased quantities of matériel in the form of guns and ammunition for use on the In-